



Lessons from the Grafton Police: Sharing BWC Footage

During 2020-21 Chief Jeff Caponera completely revamped the Grafton Police Department's BWC policies to allow them to share BWC footage. Officers are now able to share links. Officers tag videos for positive interactions that the Public Information Officer reviews and proactively shares with the community. They usually share experiences such as community events or animal rescues.

When asked about protocols for sharing, Chief Caponera said they won't share footage unless the people involved in video are aware of it. If it's a positive interaction, they notify citizens for permission to show it. If permission isn't granted and the department decides it is important to share, they will blur out the citizens and then share it with the public.

Whenever they receive a request, they will honor it. But they typically don't send footage to citizens without a request. They share footage with the District Attorney's office, which is automatically attached to case files.

Sharing footage works in a couple of different ways, says the chief. First, it shows the officers' side; what the officers perceived. "That is really big," he told us. "No matter how justifiable, use of force never looks good. So, we push out the footage and say 'this is from the officer's perception, now you decide when you see the full perspective.' Further, the chief said, "I don't believe in hiding stuff. We are public officials. The BWC footage showcases that we are doing the right things for the right reasons. We aren't abusing power. We are honest and open, and people respect it in our community. It makes a difference."

The department's greatest challenge is the state's open records law. It takes a lot of time to go through the videos and redact them. When there are multiple officers on the scene it takes hours to make redactions. For critical incidents, Chief Caponera said, "we use footage for every use of force. We have a very robust policy for use of force and pursuits. Our

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sergeants go through videos regularly to ensure compliance."

Video footage is also used for training. Chief Caponera said, "We use good videos and we use not-so-good videos. We meet with the officers involved in the incident first to break it down. We let them know we are going to use this for training. We assure them that we are not calling them out. Fortunately, we have really sharp officers, and we don't get a lot of complaints...We constantly train on de-escalation, and our officers are level-headed. They explain things."

"We are grateful that we have the body-worn cameras. The officers love them."



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